

U.S. Embassy Baghdad Annual Program Statement on The Ambassador's Funds

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U.S. Embassy Baghdad Annual Program Statement on The Ambassador's Funds

This program is authorized pursuant to section 634A of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA); and sections 7015(c) & (f) and 7009(c)(3) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2012 (Div. I, P.L. 112-74) (SFOAA)

To Interested Applicants:

The purpose of this Annual Program Statement (APS) is to solicit applications for funding. The United States Government (USG), through the U.S. Department of State (DoS), is seeking Statements of Interest (SOIs) from prospective partners to implement activities that promote reconciliation and stability in Iraq and that improve the institutional capacity of Iraqi organizations and local communities. The geographic focus under consideration is Iraq.

The total amount of funding for this APS is expected to be approximately \$10,000,000. DoS expects that the majority of the awards will be within the range of \$200,000 to \$500,000, although smaller awards and larger awards up to \$2,000,000 may be considered. The amount of available funding is subject to change and DoS reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this APS.

Competition for awards through this APS shall be open for one year. Awards will be made on a rolling basis. Initial SOIs shall be due 30 days after the release of this APS. Additional review dates may be announced at a later date. This APS seeks proposals for funding in FY 2013 (October 2012-September 2013), although proposals should contemplate activities that continue beyond FY 2013.

This APS is seeking proposals that offer creative and effective approaches to promote reconciliation and stability in Iraq and to improve the institutional capacity of Iraqi organizations and local communities. Applicants may focus on one topic or, preferably, on a combination of topics such as: improving access to local government; enhancing social stability; building civil society capacity; and fostering economic growth.

Proposed projects may focus on innovative approaches to addressing these topics or on how best to scale up existing small projects that have shown demonstrated impact in a limited capacity to date. Applications should include plans for documenting and sharing key lessons.

The geographic focus is Iraq; applications outside of the geographic focus will not be considered. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to manage cultural and political considerations in Iraq, as well as to address USG concerns related to working in Iraq.

1 Background

The U.S Department of State's (DoS) foreign assistance program in Iraq aims to achieve the U.S. and Iraqi governments' common goal of a nation that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant; that has a government that is representative, just, and accountable to all Iraqis; that provides equal opportunities for women and girls and recognizes their role in fostering security and peace; that denies support and safe haven to terrorists; and that contributes to the peace and security of the region. It is our common goal to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of Iraq's government institutions, within the framework of the U.S-Iraqi partnership.

The Department continues to build on the significant human, financial, and diplomatic resources that the U.S. has invested in Iraq. Through Embassy Baghdad's Ambassador's Fund DoS will continue working to:

- strengthen Iraqi civil society;
- promote the rule of law;
- strengthen the role of women across Iraqi society;
- advance broad based prosperity by supporting efforts that strengthen Iraq's private-sector economy and support the country's reintegration in the world economy;
- serve vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), widows and single female heads of household, and religious and ethnic minorities; and
- improve the capability and effectiveness of the Government of Iraq (GOI) at the national and provincial level.

In support of these goals, DoS works directly with the GOI, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and academic institutions, as well as other governments.

2 Program Description

2.1 Overall Program Objectives

This Annual Program Statement (APS) is to provide assistance to the people of Iraq in promoting reconciliation and stability, improving the institutional capacity of Iraqi NGOs, and bettering the lives of all citizens in local communities. Project activities funded through this APS will be used to improve access to local government, enhance social stability, build civil society capacity, and foster economic growth. Activities may include, but are not limited to: training programs, workshops and/or conferences; publication and dissemination of materials in support of program objectives; program-related travel; or support for the development and use of new forms of media to further program goals.

2.1.1 Examples of Activities That We Would Fund

The below examples of illustrative activities are listed to assist proposers in developing proposal ideas:

- Provision of experts/consultants to assist either governmental or private-sector institutions in planning and implementing pilot projects;
- In-country training programs to introduce international best practices in public-sector administration, governance of private-sector institutions, or conduct of business appropriate to Iraq;
- Provision of reference materials drawing from international best practices or other appropriate examples in the Middle East region for use in university and/or continuing education programs.
- Training NGOs, particularly in the extractive industries arena, how to recognize, report, and reduce corruption through technical training camps (e.g. in areas such as citizen journalism,

citizen generated data, open source technologies, peer-to-peer networking, and search technologies);

- Funding newspapers focusing on women's issues;
- Supporting orphanages located in areas with a large minority population;
- Supporting minority cultural centers and their outreach activities (e.g. newspaper publication, language education, etc.);
- Supporting income-generating activities for widows (e.g. production of textiles, household products) and the physically challenged;
- Provision of legal services to vulnerable populations, including women and IDPs in order to remediate identity issues (jensiya), unregistered marriages, and the status of divorced women;
- Training journalists to better understand and report on economic issues such as:
 1. Key economic indicators and how to discuss them during interviews;
 2. Ethics in news and business;
- Training journalists on the basics of economic news coverage in areas such as:
 1. How to work with graphs and statistics;
 2. How to communicate complex financial concepts;
 3. How to highlight the human elements in economic reports;
- Training NGOs on how to administer grants from the USG.

2.1.2 What We Would Not Fund

- NEA/I will not consider projects that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization, whether or not elected members of government.
- The bulk of project activities must take place in Iraq and last between one and three years. U.S.-based activities, study tours, scholarships or exchange projects will not be deemed competitive.

2.2 Proposed Funding

DoS expects to award multiple cooperative agreements under this APS with a total budget of approximately \$10,000,000. DoS expects that the majority of the awards will be within the range of \$200,000 to \$500,000, although smaller awards and larger awards up to \$2,000,000 may be considered

2.3 Substantial Involvement

DoS will be substantially involved in the program and management performance of these cooperative agreements through consultation and technical collaboration on specified program activities.

2.3.1 DoS Responsibilities

Examples of DoS responsibilities for a cooperative agreement may include:

- a) Collaboration in establishing annual program objectives and approval of an annual work plan;
- b) Collaboration in assessing progress and identifying issues that arise, which may impact the success of the program;
- c) Collaboration in determining corrective actions, where necessary;
- d) Approval of key personnel and any subsequent changes in the positions during the life of the award;
- e) Collaboration in the creation of any training materials;

2.3.2 Reporting

Required reporting on program implementation will be determined based on the planned program and the defined roles and responsibilities. An annual performance monitoring plan, using established baseline data and specific, measurable targets and indicators will also be agreed upon. Financial reporting will be in accordance with the requirements of the obligating document.

3 Instructions to Applicants

3.1 Eligibility

This APS is issued as a public notice to ensure that all interested and qualified organizations have a fair opportunity to submit applications for funding.

The U.S. Embassy Baghdad is seeking applications from registered U.S., Iraqi, and other international non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations and for-profit organizations willing to forego profit.

Eligible organizations could include, for example, foundations, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations (FBOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), host country organizations, private organizations affiliated with public academic institutions and international non-governmental organizations, private companies, and professional associations.

Applications that include local Iraqi implementing partners will be considered favorably. Once awarded, non-Iraqi recipients will be required to find a local Iraqi implementing partner if one has not already been selected. (Waivers for this requirement will be approved on a case by case basis.)

As of October 1, 2005 DoS requires that proposals be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov.

Please note: In order to safeguard the security of applicants' electronic information, www.grants.gov utilizes a credential provider. It is the process of determining, with certainty, that someone really is who they claim to be.

The credential provider for www.grants.gov is Operational Research Consultants (ORC). Applicants MUST register with ORC to receive a username and password which you will need to register with www.grants.gov as an authorized organization representative (AOR). Once your organization's E-Business point of contact has assigned these rights, you will be authorized to submit grant applications through Grants.gov on behalf of your organization.

Each organization will need to be registered with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) and you will need to have your organization's DUNS number available to complete this process. After your organization registers with the CCR, you must wait three business days before you can obtain a username and password.

PLEASE be advised that completing all the necessary steps for obtaining a username and password from www.grants.gov can take up to four full weeks. DoS strongly urges applicants to begin this process on www.grants.gov well in advance of the submission deadline. Please access www.grants.gov for the necessary information.

***For organizations solely based in Iraq without an established DUNS number, please contact the Near Eastern Affairs Office of Iraq (NEA/I) Grants Team at Iraq-Assist@state.gov and we will assist you in filling out the CCR registration so you may access www.grants.gov to submit your proposal.**

3.2 APS Process and Application Submission

The U.S. Embassy Baghdad will review Statements of Interest (SOI) that meet the identified needs of this solicitation. Organizations will be notified if their SOI is chosen to move forward. At that time the organization will be given instructions and asked to submit a full proposal.

The first review of SOI applications shall be 30 days after initial posting on the website www.grants.gov. Any additional review dates shall be announced at a later date. At any time after posting, DoS may determine that the needs outlined in the APS have been met, at which time the APS solicitation will be closed to new proposals. See cover page for precise dates.

To establish eligibility the Recipient(s) will undergo a pre-award audit conducted by the NEA/I Monitoring and Evaluation Team to establish whether the Recipient(s) meets the United States Government (USG) financial, management and programmatic requirements.

Questions related to submissions in response to this APS should be submitted by e-mail to Iraq-Assist@state.gov.

3.3 Technical Application Instructions and Review Process

3.3.1 Technical Application

All materials must be in English. SOIs must be submitted as two-page Microsoft Word documents, single-spaced, in Times New Roman 12 point font with a minimum of 1-inch margins. All documents must be formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper and all pages numbered. Each submission must include a header that indicates the SOI title and submitting organization. SOIs that do not meet the requirements of the announcement may not be considered. SOIs that request more than the award ceiling (\$2,000,000) will be deemed technically ineligible.

SOIs must include:

- 1) Brief description of the organization, including the organization's mission statement and previous work in Iraq or other challenging programmatic environments. Due to page limitations, a general organizational history is not recommended. Information should clearly demonstrate an institution's record and capacity and may include previous grant management experience, whether funded through private or USG resources.
- 2) Project description, including project duration, goals, and objectives. A monthly timeline, outputs, and outcomes should also be provided. Outputs and outcomes should clearly link to project objectives and include target benchmarks. A plan to monitor and evaluate the project should be described and the likelihood of sustainability of the project should be made evident.
- 3) Brief statement on the methodology to be used in project evaluation.
- 4) An estimated budget. The budget should include 1) Program Costs, 2) Administrative Costs (which include Indirect Costs), and 3) Cost sharing offered, if any.

Please note that while a detailed budget is not requested at this time, organizations invited to submit full proposals should not exceed the estimated SOI budget figure.

All organizations must also fill out and submit SF-424, SF-424A, and SF-424B forms as directed on www.grants.gov. Each form contains instructions.

Please use the following information to fill in the SF-424:

11. The CFDA number is 19.016

12. Please enter the Funding Opportunity Number (NEA-NEAIQ-13-003) and Title (Ambassador's Fund APS)
19. Please enter "c"

3.3.2 Branding

Effective March 23, 2012, to promote greater clarity in projecting to foreign audiences DoS's role in these overseas programs and activities, the Department has instituted a moratorium on the introduction of new logos and markings designed for use with foreign publics, and has designated mandated uses of the U.S. flag in conjunction with established Department logos. All publicity and promotional materials should underscore sponsorship by or partnership with the U.S. Government or the U.S. Embassy. If an applicant is invited to submit a full proposal, the NEA/I Grants Officer will request the Applicant to submit a Branding Strategy that describes how the program, project, or activity is named and positioned, how it is promoted and communicated to beneficiaries and cooperating country citizens, and identifies all donors and explains how they will be acknowledged. DoS will not competitively evaluate the proposed Branding Strategy. For general questions about the Department marking policy and overall branding strategy, please review the information at http://fa.statebuy.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=212&menu_id=68.

4 Evaluation Criteria

The Statements of Interest (SOIs) will be evaluated in accordance with the technical evaluation criteria set forth below. Applicants whose SOIs best meet Ambassador's Fund program objectives, and provide value to the U.S. Government and Iraqi partners and recipients, considering both technical and cost factors, will be asked to move on to the next stage and submit a full proposal.

DoS will review all proposals for eligibility. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance of Federal and DoS regulations and guidelines and may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other DoS offices. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the NEA/I Grants Officers.

A DoS Review Committee will evaluate proposals submitted under this request.

Applicants should note that these criteria: (1) serve as the standard against which all applications will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that Applicants should address in their applications.

Standard Evaluation Criteria:

4.1 Quality of Program Idea

SOIs should be responsive to the solicitation and exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to Embassy Baghdad's mission, which is to support the Government of Iraq (GOI) in its efforts towards democratization, improvements to the security environment, and long-term development. USG assistance, in partnership with the GOI, supports improving the capability and effectiveness at all levels of the Iraqi government, increasing participation of civil society, creating the conditions for more diverse and broad-based economic growth and income generation, catalyzing the transformation of key social sectors (e.g., health and education), and addressing ongoing humanitarian needs.

The design should provide evidence of the potential for success. This could include proposing programs that have been tested previously in other communities or governorates, expanding existing programs or continuing programs that have demonstrated results.

4.2 Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives and Work Plan

A strong SOI will clearly describe how the proposed program activities contribute to achieving the overall program objectives, and each activity will be clearly developed and detailed. A brief relevant work plan should include milestones and the logistical capacity of the organization. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable and achievable. Applicants should also provide a monthly timeline of project activities to demonstrate how the program will be implemented to achieve its proposed objectives. SOIs should address how the program will work with all of the important partners and should identify them if appropriate. If local partners have been identified, DoS strongly encourages applicants to submit letters of support from proposed in-country partners. These letters do not count toward the two-page limit. Additionally, applicants should describe who will be responsible to complete all the tasks among the direct applicant and any local partners. If applicable, proposals should identify where the program will be conducted, who are the targeted populations, and what are the selection criteria for participants, in addition to any other pertinent details. In particularly challenging operating environments, proposals should include contingency plans for overcoming potential difficulties in executing the original work plan and address any operational or programmatic security concerns and how they will be addressed.

4.3 Multiplier Effect/Sustainability

SOIs should include a plan for sustainability that describes how the program will initiate positive impact and how it will continue beyond the life of the grant. A strong sustainability plan may include demonstrating continuing impact beyond the life of a project or garnering other donor support after funding ceases or, ideally, continuing to operate without donor support.

4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Complete SOIs should include a brief narrative of how the project's achievements will be monitored and evaluated throughout the project. Applicants that are invited to submit a full proposal based on their SOI will be required to provide a more detailed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan, expanding on the points described below.

Incorporating a well-designed monitoring and evaluation component into a project is one of the most efficient methods of documenting the progress and potential success of a program. Successful monitoring and evaluation depend on the following:

- Clearly stating what the project plans specifically to achieve in well-defined objectives and ensuring that the project can achieve these objectives within the life of the project;
- Linking program activities to strategic objectives;
- Developing key performance indicators (measurements) that include baselines and targets, and that measure on a regular basis progress towards achieving program objectives.

Strong M&E plans incorporate performance indicators for *all* program objectives and activities and include baselines, targets, and data sources for each indicator. Performance indicators are tools to objectively observe program progress and measure the degree of success a program's planned activities have had in achieving the program's stated objectives. Performance indicators should address the direct products and services delivered by a program and the results generated by those products and services.

DoS recommends that applicants include a clear description of the methodology and data collection strategies and tools to be employed (e.g., pre- and post-test surveys, interviews, focus groups). DoS expects that the grantee will track participants or partners as appropriate and be able to respond to key evaluation questions that address, for example, satisfaction with the program; information learned as a result of the program; changes in attitude, behavior, or skills as a result of the program; and the effects of

the program on institutions or organizations where participants work. Lastly, applicants should include the M&E process in their timeline.

Recipients of awards will be required to provide regular reporting of project monitoring with an analysis and summary of their findings in their quarterly technical and final reports to NEA/I. It is required that recipients refer back to their M&E plan in preparing these reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years after the project ends and provided to DoS upon request.

4.5 Institution's Record and Capacity (Past Performance)

DoS will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. SOIs should demonstrate an institutional record of successful programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past grants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the project's objectives.

4.6 Cost Effectiveness

The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries, honoraria, general and administrative, and overhead expenses should be kept as low as possible. All other budget items should be necessary and appropriate. Given that the majority of program activities funded through this APS will take place in Iraq, costs based in countries other than Iraq should be kept to a minimum. Cost sharing, which is when the recipient contributes funds, services, or goods toward the project, is strongly encouraged and is viewed favorably by the reviewers.

Point of Contact for question/concerns:

Iraq-Assist@state.gov